

# *Oh My Brother*

KATIE KOUMARIANOS

The rifle stands wedged into the ground  
between standard issue combat boots  
with your helmet delicately balanced atop the barrel.

Eleven years since the world halted in dismay,  
silenced by air thick with grief.  
Liberty burned to ashes scattered by the wind.

He said, "We are bringing our troops home."  
Then they sent you away in a Humvee  
and brought you home in a bag.

The world is still burning outside our walls  
but tonight, there is a song faded and choked  
followed by an echo for your brothers still abroad.

I knew the moment the car approached the house.  
He stepped out in a uniform pressed and starched  
fit for a medal –  
or a funeral.

Oh my brother, the terrible things you must have seen.  
Forget them now as they lay you down to rest  
Sleeping forever in your Dress Blues.